

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 SIG-03 MMO-01 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08
DOE-15 SOE-02 IO-13 /129 W
-----046900 260845Z /11

R 250701Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4546
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
COMIDEASTFOR MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 1953

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLICAL CHANGES IN YAR

SUMMARY: PARLIAMENT CREATES ONE MAN PRESIDENCY, DISSOLVING
COMMAND COUNCIL, GHASHMI ELECTED TO NEW POST. PRIME MINISTER
(WHO WAS ALSO ON COMMAND COUNCIL) ASKED TO FORM NEW
GOVERNMENT. EVOLUTION LEAVES PARATROOP COMMANDER ABDALLAH
ABDAL-ALIM, WHO WAS THIRD MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL, WITH LESS
POWER THEN EVER BEFORE. CONSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION PAVES
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WAY FOR NEW APPOINTMENTS IN BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN
FIELDS.

1. LONG DISCUSSED MOVES TO DISSOLVE COMMAND COUNCIL AND
GIVE YEMENI STRONG AN LT. COL. AHMAD AL-GHASHMI TRAPPINGS
OF LEGITIMACY THROUGH ELECTION BY PARLIMENT, CULMINATED YES-
TERDAY, 23 APRIL WITH SWEARING IN OF GHASHMI AS FIRST

INCUMBENT OF NEW OFFICE, PRESIDENCY OF FIVES YEARS TER.

2. SIMULTANEOUSLY, GHASHMI BECAME COMMANDER IN CHIEF, WHICH HAD BEEN CAREFULLY SEPARATED IN ORIGINAL, SO-CALLED PERMANENT CONSTITUTION OF YEMEN, BUT HELD ON EXCEPTIONAL BASIS BY BOTH HANDI AND, AFTER HIM, BY GHASHMI.

3. THIS CONSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION FOLLOWED NEW GRANT OF POWER TO APPOINTED AND LARGELY HONORARY PARLIMENT (SEE SANA 747). GHASHMI, AS CHAIRMAN, DECREED ON 17 APRIL THAT PARLIMENT HAD UNQUALIFIED POWER TO DETERMINE FORM OF PRESIDENCY AND TO TAKE STEPS TO CARRY OUT OFFICE. PARLIMENT CREATED OFFICE DESIRED WITHIN WEEK, ELECTED GHASHMI TO IT UNANIMOUSLY.

4. GHASHMI'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH CLEARLY SIGNALLED HIS DESIRE FOR BROAD BASE OF SUPPORT FROM YEMEN'S MANY REGIONS, SECTS, INTEREST GROUPS. IT SEEMED PHRASED TO REASSURE SOUTHERNERS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO GIVE TRADITIONAL AND NORTHERN ELEMENTS PREDOMINANT ROLE IN NEW GOVERNMENT. AS FURTHER PROOF, GHASHMI LATER IN SAME DAY, 23 APRIL, APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT. AT DCM LUNCH FOR DEPARTING AMBASSADOR SCOTES, PM SAID HE EXPECTED GHASHMI TO MAINTAIN BALANCE IN NORTH-SOUTH, ZAYDI-SHAFEI, LEFT-RIGHT FACTIONS IN YEMEN. NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD, HE SAID, SHIFT SOUTHERNER AND TECHNOCRAT
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ABDAL KARIM AL-IRYANI FROM MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, BUT HE WOULD BE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND CONTINUE AS CHAIRMAN OF UNIVERSITY. OTHER CHANGES WOULD BE FEW, ACCORDING TO PM. MINAG AL-WAJEEH WOULD GO TO EDUCATION. HE IS CONSERVATIVE AND FAIRLY INEFFECTUAL MAN FROM HODEIDAH. HE WILL, HOWEVER, BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN PACE OF MODERNIZATION IN MINISTRY DESPITE PRESSURES OF MUSLIN AND SAUDI-ORIENTED GROUPS TO HALT AND RESCIND CERTAIN REVISIONS OF CURRICULUM. PM ALSO SAID HE HOPED TO MOVE ALI AL-BAHR TO CPO TO TAKE JOB OF PRESENT HEAD, MOHAMMED ABD AL-WAHHAB AL-ARIKI.

5. OTHERS IN SANA EXPECT TO SEE MORE CHANGES. MANY ARE SPECIFIC IN SAYING THAT GHASHMI--OR COMPLIANT PARLIAMENT-- WILL CREATE TWO NEW POSTS CALLED VICE PRESIDENT, ONE FOR SOUTHERNER (LIKE PM, WHO FREQUENTLY CITED) AND OTHER FOR NORTHERNER (PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER ABBJBDJCM AL-ARSHI WHO IS FROM KHAULAN MENTIONED OFTEN FOR THIS JOB).

6. IT IS CLEARLY JUST AS IMPORTANT TO GHASHMI TO REGULARIZE ARMY POSTS. GHASHMI STILL HAS PROBLEMS HERE. OFFICERS ARE CONTENTIOUS, GRASPING LOT. HE HAS MOVED AGAINST ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM EFFECTIVELY, FIRST DISRUPTING KIND OF ALLIANCES

WITH OTHER COMMANDERS (LIKE KOUHALI IN AMRAN) WHICH
MIGHT HAVE MADE ABDALLAH REAL THREAT TO REGIME, AND THEN
DISPERSING ABDALLAH'S UNITS TO REMOTE PARTS OF COUNTRY.
BARELY 300 OF TOUCH SHAFEI PARATROOPERS ARE STILL IN SANA.
NOW ABDALLAH HAS LOST HIS COMMAND COUNCIL JOB. GHASHMI
WILL PROBABLY EASE HIM OUT COMPLETELY AT SOME POINT.
SAUDIS, DESPITE SHOW OF FRIENDSHIP, FEAR AND DISLIKE
NASIRIST TENDENCIES OF ABDALLAH. BUT GHASHMI MUST STILL
PASS OUT POSTS, BOOTY, PRESTIGE TO SUIT HIS SUPPORTERS, AND
TO SUIT MILITARY CHIEFTAINS LIKE ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN
AND HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, AMBITIOUS MOUJAHID ABU SHUWARIB.
FOR MOMENT, BOTH OF LATTER ARE VERY HAPPY WITH EVENTS. WITH
YAHYA MUTAWAKKIL RETURNING TO YEMEN THIS WEEK OR NEXT, ANOTHER
HIGH COUNTING CARD CLOSE TO MOUJAHID IS BEING SLIPPED INTO
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THE DECK. HUSAYN MASWARI, A FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF HAS
RETURNED TO SANA FROM HAMDI-IMPOSED EXILE. ONLY ABU
LUHUMS, AMONG FORMER MILITARY POWERS, SEEMS LEFT OUT OF
DEAL.

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PAGE 01 SANA 01953 02 OF 02 260822Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 SIG-03 MMO-01
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NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00
EB-08 DOE-15 SOE-02 /129 W
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R 250701Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4547
INFO RUQMKGUMAMEMBASSY AMMAN 0880
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SANA 1953

7. MOVES IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY FIELDS ARE CLEARLY SET AGAINST CONTINUING COMPETITION BETWEEN SAUDIS AND SOVIETS FOR FAVOR AND INFLUENCE HERE. CHIEF OF STAFF ALI SHAYBA RETURNED FRIDAY APRIL 21 FROM EXTENDED TRIP TO MOSCOW. SAUDIS SAY ONLY TALK WAS ABOUT SPARE PARTS, BUT THEY ARE MOVING ON F5B'S, AUGUSTA-BELL HELICOPTERS, PERHAPS OTHER ITEMS, WE DON'T KNOW. WITH SHAYBA WAS KEY HAMDI SUPPORTER AND CO-CONSPIRATOR HAMUD AL QADINAH, HEAD OF ONE OF STRONGEST UNITS IN SANA.

8. COMMENT: SMR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, CONSTITUTIONAL
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EVOLUTION MEANS LITTLE. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE OF 23 APRIL CATCHES THIS NEATLY. IN BIG RED LETTERS, IT ANNOUNCES THAT CHAIRMAN (RA'IS) GHASHMI HAD BECOME PRESIDENT (RA'IS). WE DOUBT THAT CONSTITUTIONAL GIMMICKRY WILL DO MUCH TO LEGITIMIZE GHASHMI. REAL TESTS WILL COME IN DISTRIBUTION OF POSTS IN GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY IN SHARPENING SOVIET-SAUDI COMPETITION. THIS IS NEXT, AND WILL SET STAGE FOR HIS GROWING ASCENDENCY OR WEAKENING IN NEXT SIX MONTHS. OXFRANSOM

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